

Florida

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Outdoor Recreation

Suwannee River Revisited
Bag A Spring Gobbler

WILDLIFE

FEBRUARY 1975

The Florida Magazine for all Sportsmen

35 CENTS

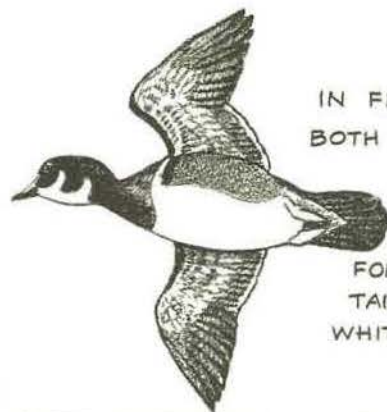
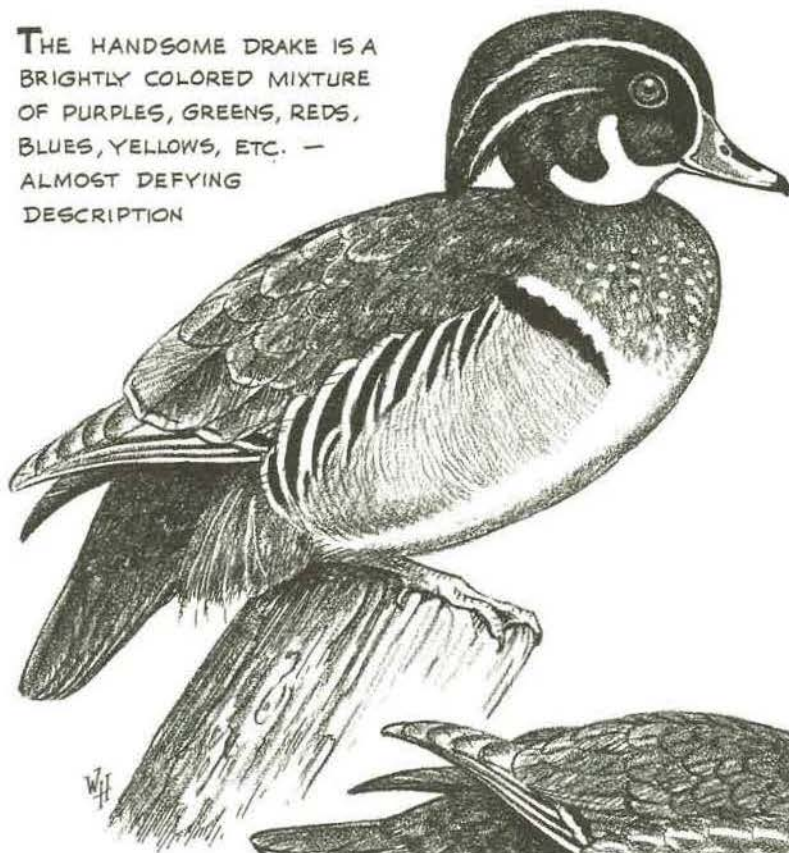


Florida Wildlife Scrapbook

CONSIDERED THE MOST BEAUTIFUL OF
OUR NORTH AMERICAN WATERFOWL, THE —

WOOD DUCK

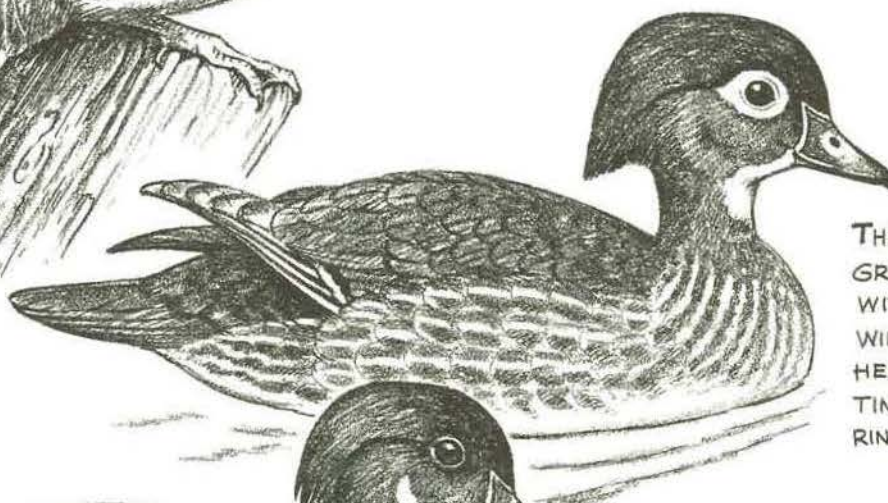
THE HANDSOME DRAKE IS A
BRIGHTLY COLORED MIXTURE
OF PURPLES, GREENS, REDS,
BLUES, YELLOWS, ETC. —
ALMOST DEFYING
DESCRIPTION



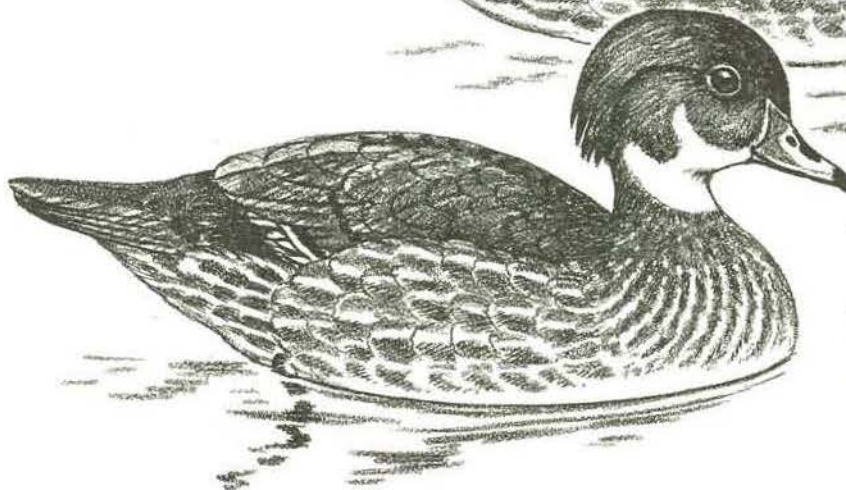
IN FLIGHT,
BOTH SEXES —

LOOK
FOR LONG
TAIL AND
WHITE BELLY

FOUND IN FLORIDA THE
YEAR AROUND • INHABITS
CYPRESS SWAMPS AND TREE
BORDERED LAKES AND RIVERS
• NESTS IN HOLLOW TREES •
OFTEN CALLED "SUMMER DUCK"
• SIZE — 17 TO 20 INCHES IN
LENGTH • WEIGHT 1 TO 1 3/4 LBS.



THE HEN—MOSTLY
GRAYISH BROWN
WITH BLUE IN THE
WINGS, A CRESTED
HEAD AND A DIS-
TINCTIVE WHITE
RING AROUND EYES



DURING THE SUMMER SEASON, THE
DRAKE MOULTS HIS COLORFUL
GARB, THEN RESEMBLING THE HEN
EXCEPT FOR FACIAL MARKINGS
AND BILL COLOR • THIS IS CALLED
THE "ECLIPSE" PLUMAGE • JUVENILE
DRAKES ALSO LOOK LIKE THIS

Florida WILDLIFE

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State of Florida

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The Cover

The annual growing and dropping of antlers by whitetail buck deer is an interesting phenomenon and a little-understood one, even among outdoorsmen. In fact, some deer hunters still don't believe bucks shed their "rocking chairs" every year, but it's a biological fact. See page 2.

From a Painting by Wallace Hughes

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1

Photo By Wallace Hughes



2

Photo By Leonard Lee Rue III

it happens every year in the
natural cycle of things

Antlers Come Antlers Go

WATCH AN AUTUMN-PRIME WHITETAIL BUCK pick his way through a patch of woodland. It's an attractive sight. Muscles ripple under sleek hide. Movements of his body, wide and deep from a summer of good browsing, hint of alertness, power, and pent-up energy. But catch a glint of sun on freshly rubbed antler and you really begin to pick up vibrations that stir a mysterious force deep inside the being of every hunter.

A Bambified, anti-nimrod will nod wisely and utter inane remarks involving bloodlust and gore. But those who have a real feeling for the chase recognize this is not at all the case. It goes far beyond the wish to have a venison steak or two on the table. Or to render to possession a creature against whom one holds no malice whatever.

In the archaic definition of the word, horn (hence also antler in the common usage) indicated a symbol or source of strength. Primitive peoples, attuned to the natural world more than most moderns could ever hope to be, found in antlers this same attractive force. It reached beyond the mere value of these

1. In the winter, this buck's antlers have been dropped, leaving only the socket-shaped terminal end of the bony pedicles. 2. With the lengthening days of spring, stimulation of glandular secretions trigger process of antler development. The buck's appetite increases quite a bit, for the growth of a new set of antlers requires a heavy supply of nutrients. Quality and quantity of food has a lot to do with antlers' size. 3. By mid-July, the antlers are growing very rapidly. Well supplied with nerves and blood vessels, pliable antlers are sensitive and subject to damage. 4. A week later the swollen antler tips show definite signs of branching. 5. Late August and antlers have reached their full length and spread. The hairy epidermal covering, the "velvet," is still intact. 6. By mid-September, buck is becoming noticeably more aggressive. He's still careful of his antlers, for even small breaks in the velvet, as shown in picture, make the blood flow.

By MORRIE NAGGIAR

bony adornments as raw material for tools and weapons.

Examine the pictorial records left by ancient Americans. Pecked or painted on the walls of caves and overhangs, especially in the western half of the country, are thousands of "reports" of long-forgotten hunts. Almost all involve game with huge, many-tined antlers. There were certainly as many antlerless animals abroad during those times, but that fact is seldom recorded.

A friend of native American extraction with whom I was once viewing some ancestral paintings on a western canyon wall wasn't too serious about it.



3



4



5



6

Photos By Morrie Naggior

Pausing before one red-painted pictograph showing a cluster of huge-antlered bucks being shot up by a lone human figure with bow in hand, he irreverently observed, "That guy was either a whale of a liar or a real dreamer."

What is the nature of these adornments that seem to hold such attraction? Where sportsmen gather, you're as likely to hear them referred to as horns

as you are to hear them called, more properly, antlers. Although they are located in the same area of an animal's anatomy, and serve the same function, horns and antlers are very different structures.

Horns are carried by such animals as goats, cattle, and sheep. They contain a permanent core of bone, actually a projection of the frontal bones of the skull.

(Continued on next page)



7

Photo By Leonard Lee Rue III



8

Photo By Wallace Hughes



9

Photo By Morrie Naggiar

(Continued from preceding page)

Around this core is formed an outer covering of keratin, a tough, fibrous protein material secreted by specialized epidermal cells. This is, for all practical purposes, the same material of which hair, nails, and hoofs are composed. Horns are not shed, but if by mishap the keratinous sheath is badly damaged, it may be dropped and a new covering grown. This is the same sort of thing that happens if you manage to land a misdirected hammer blow to a finger and lose the nail as a result.

The American pronghorn antelope, which is not really an antelope at all but the only member of a separate group of hooved mammals, departs from the usual pattern. The pronghorn has horns from which the outer covering is shed annually.

In contrast with horns, which are permanent fixtures, antlers, though they are actually solid bone, are shed and regrown each year.

Antler development in the white-tailed deer starts when the animal is about 10 months of age. On the

7. In the fall, the blood supply to the antlers dwindles, and then stops. The velvet dies soon after, and is rubbed off against trees and bushes. Now the buck is ready to engage in combat with other bucks for the does. 8. Following the rut, the bone at the base of the antlers granulates, and they soon break off, usually within several hours of one another. Rodents and other small wildlings frequently gnaw upon them. Deterioration by weather returns much of the tied up nutrients to the soil where they originated.

heads of buck fawns you may notice circular "buttons" sometimes pointed out as developing antlers. This is not quite correct. Actually, the bumps are pedicles, the bony protuberances of the frontal bone from which the antlers grow.

Although the annual cycle of events in the white-tails' world follows a similar pattern throughout the state, there is considerable variation in the timing between north and south Florida. The buck featured in the illustrations is a resident of Leon County in north Florida. ●

Silver King

FISHING

stillfishing for big tarpon began and peaked in south Florida a generation ago, but the method is still "in" and makes for spectacular sport



By CHARLES WATERMAN

SNOOPING THROUGH ANGLING HISTORY I shouldn't have been surprised to learn the Florida tarpon actually started rod and reel fishing for really big fish—but I was. I knew that A. W. Dimock had thrown flies to them before the Spanish-American War, but the heavy-tackle tarpon history is shorter than I'd figured.

It was natural that the tarpon would start big-fish angling because it could be reached with a skiff and could be seen from a lot of harbors and river banks. Deepwater angling didn't start suddenly because it required good-sized boats, and some of the techniques we take for granted had to be developed.

It was also natural for tarpon fishing to get its start with the "grain," or multipronged spear, mentioned in last month's column—because folks along the eastern seaboard had been accustomed to sticking everything from sperm whales to porpoises, and the tarpon was a pretty good target

Lifting up on a 100 lb. tarpon is a good way to wear him down. Another gimmick is to put the rod tip down in shallow water and then pull him over on his nose.



because of its dramatic rolling. (The drill, you'll recall, was to chug a grain into a tarpon and let him tow the boat until he was exhausted.) Tourists from the North were eager to buy the big burnished scales, and I've read some accounts which stated the "tarpum" was good food. Today, hardly anyone eats a tarpon unless he hasn't heard what it's going to be like. I have mangled on this and have no personal experience, although I understand a bite of tarpon tends to grow as you masticate it.

A tarpon, despite his size and toughness, can get suspicious of a bait pretty quickly. I think that was one of the things that made the early fishing tough. The old timers figured their version of shark tackle was needed for a fish that size, and a defunct mullet on a monstrous hook with a chain leader was likely to be viewed with disfavor by the Silver King (a name that has been with us for at least a hundred years). So if the tarpon picked up the bait, he was likely to throw it back at the fisherman as only a tarpon can, and when he jumped higher than the angler's head to do it, he gave an impression of invincibility.

Then too, the initial run of a big tarpon is very hard to stop short. From what I read, the first fishermen tried to smack him as soon as he had their bait. That might work with small baits and sharp hooks of medium size, but that wasn't what they used, logically figuring a big fish preferred a whopping meal.

Now up to that time the largest salt water fish regularly taken on rod and reel was the striped bass. The striper came into rivers to spawn, and it fed in the surf where it could be reached from shore. They caught quite a number of those over 50 pounds, which was some job with the old reels that didn't have much in the way of drags. They went after the tarpon with the same equipment at first, except for the outsized baits and hooks. Sometimes, they had leather guards attached to the reel and sometimes they used thumbstalls that had to be soaked in water so they wouldn't burn up.

Finally, in 1885, William H. Wood caught a 93-pounder, and that's widely recognized as the first big tarpon on rod and reel. When that was announced as Number One by *FOREST AND STREAM* magazine there was a rash of other claims, but

(Continued on next page)

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Wood's fish was thoroughly documented, and held up. Baby tarpon had been caught on flies before that, but it took the big one to start an epidemic of Florida expeditions by people who wanted in on the big deal.

Wood hadn't come up with any startling secrets, but he'd decided the best way was to let the fish go until it had swallowed the bait—or was in the act of swallowing it—and that became the standard procedure. As nearly as I can tell, most of the early biggies were caught by "gorging," or letting the fish swallow the bait, but "gorging" didn't sound very sporting and they described it as simply letting him have it for a while before leaning on him.

Then, since casting wasn't any big deal in bottom fishing, they were using really stiff rods of 7 feet or so. I've read that those old methods were confined to another era, but the fact is a lot of tarpon are caught that way today. I'd say it's the surest procedure for someone who has limited experience with heavy fish. It goes like this:

You find a good firm bottom over which tarpon are feeding and throw a big dead mullet out where you hope he'll find it. Then you peel some line off the reel and coil it in the boat so the fish won't feel any resistance until he's moved off a piece. This is truly stillfishing. All you have to do is wait for the action. In many cases the bait is cast out by the guide, who is likely to lay something like a matchbox on top of the last coil of line in the boat to keep it from slipping out before it's needed.

Since such fishing is often done in coves where the wind doesn't move much, and since good tarpon fishing is generally in warm weather, one of the old writers described it as "sitting all day in a Turkish bath watching a string."

Now setting the hook is no big deal. Often the fish picks up the mullet, moves off a little way, swallows it, and then finds there's something attached. It's likely his first reaction is to jump, sometimes before the fisherman has even tightened up. Chances are the mullet is way down in his goozle, and although the action that follows doesn't require any great strategy it can turn into a job of work, provided the hook isn't cutting up anything vital.

Now users of lighter tackle are careful to "bow" to a hooked tarpon when he jumps, the idea being that line is easily broken in the air. The procedure of giving slack to a jumping fish is almost as old as hook and line fishing, but the tarpon still-fisherman with heavy gear often employs an opposite method. When the fish is at the top of his jump he hauls back as hard as he can, intending to bang the fish down hard. Such tactics take the fight out pretty fast and can do serious damage to his person.

Whether they often "break his neck" or not I'm not sure, but one veteran guide told me he can do it consistently. I do know that a violently twisting tarpon sometimes kills himself, so a hard jerk on the line would make it more likely. Disbelievers would be less positive if they could see some photos we've made of jumping tarpon. Sometimes the head is nearly at right angles to the fish's back line. Such photos aren't published much because the tarpon doesn't look like a fish at all when he's really tied up. Admittedly, most such twisters are fairly small fish—but then it probably wouldn't take so much twist to crack up an old resident.

When you come around to his fighting qualities there are several reasons why a tarpon is a good choice for light tackle performances. For one thing, you can frequently find him in shallow water, and deep sounding has always been the toughest duty for a guy with light stuff on a big fish. Then too, the tarpon isn't noted for long, fast runs in the category of personalities like billfish and tuna. His terrifying beginning slacks off pretty quickly, and the fight slows up after a few minutes in most cases. The first tarpon fishermen hadn't learned that.

Now when we get to the matter of sportsmanship in stillfishing, I'd say that it isn't much fun for most people who have spent a lot of time with tarpon. On the other hand, a tourist with limited time who wants a big fish to hang in his office might be pardoned for doing it the simplest way. It does look a little crude to kill a fish and then set him adrift.

Well, anyway, after Wood caught his tarpon a lot of people with money came after theirs, and the English, noted for chasing sport all over the world, set sail for Florida. The initial tarpon craze lasted until about 1900. In 1898, a man caught a bluefin tuna off Catalina Island, and big-fish fishing began going further to sea.

THE SPINNER BAIT THAT HAS PROVED SO successful for tournament bass anglers is showing up as a more versatile lure than it appeared at first. It's simply a spinner or two on an outrigger arm that works above the hook instead of directly in front of it. The general idea is nothing new, but it's been refined of late. The first lure of that type that I used was the old Shannon Twin Spinner. The spinners have gotten larger in recent years. At first, the spinner bait was generally used in straight reeling; then it was tugged along the bottom in special cases and even allowed to lie still between twitches. It seems to be pretty noisy from the bass's viewpoint, and some users tell you that it will be nailed by a fish in water so muddy he can't see it at all.

Most spinner baits are surprisingly weedless—the suspended spinner acts as a guard—and some



Spinner baits are favorites of modern bass fishermen, who fish them at all depths and at all speeds.

casters chunk them right into the landscaping. They generally have to be reeled pretty fast if the stuff is thick, and they can be hiked right up on top if your reel retrieves fast enough, making a good surface wake.

High-speed retrieves are more and more popular, bringing a demand for reels with more speed than the traditional quadruple multiplier. You can slow down with such a reel whereas a slower multiplier can't be made to go but just so fast. The reason for less multiplication in heavy salt water reels is simply the need for more leverage on the fish. But then, the big spool makes up for the lack of gear speed. If you use a big spinning reel it'll give you speed, even if the gearing doesn't indicate it.

FLY RODS HAVE GOTTEN SHORTER and shorter, the ultrashort stick being a mainstay of those who like to do their light fishing with something that *looks* light. The standard length, if there is such a thing, has ended up around 8½ feet.

A fellow arrived at the house the other day with a prototype rod that was a full 10½ feet long, which seems to be going against the trend. I had had to go into the yard to get the danged thing put together without poking out somebody's eye.

Such a rod made of older materials would cause you to begin thinking of using both hands, but this one was graphite and the overall weight was less than what I used to call an ideal bream rod. I started casting the thing with my tongue so hard against the side of my cheek I couldn't even say anything sarcastic. Man, it really tossed a lot of line and did it easily.

Advantages:

It enables you to pick up your line with a lot less of it in the water as you begin your backcast, helpful when fishing closed weed pockets.

It will flop a little more line when you aren't really casting and want to "dap" it a little.

You can use a longer leader without reeling it through the tip.

It can get your backcast up over friends and other obstacles when you're being sloppy.

It will keep you from setting a hook too hard.

Disadvantages:

It won't allow you to set hook quite so hard.

It gives a fish a lot of leverage on your wrist.

It is easy to poke into doors, bushes and outboard motors where it doesn't belong.

It will not improve your image as an ultralight tackle user.

Yes and no:

It makes a small fish feel bigger.

It carries the line higher, allowing the fly to drop lighter once you get used to it, but it can get you into wind that's worse than at lower altitude.

It is a nice gadget for somebody who has other fly rods. Maybe a beginner should start with something shorter.

UP OR DOWN PULLS ARE HARDER on a fish than pulls against his travel route. Some time ago I expounded about the procedure of big-fish anglers in shallow water who push the rod tip down near the bottom to roll the victim over nosefirst. In bass fishing there isn't so much necessity for this, and it would be pretty stupid in weedy water unless you're opposed to the fish's jumping.

Full speed ahead with the electric motor can often get you above a weed-hunting bass pretty quickly—the vanishing breed of cooperative oarsmen did it for a long time. Unless he's close to the boat, you can't lift much. You'll have to pull his head up by simple horsepower once you get to where he's building a nest. Then you just keep him coming.

This sounds contrary to the old policy of letting him come with light pressure as long as he's headed your way, but the lifting process is resorted to when he's already beginning to hole up. Of course, as long as he's coming you should let him do it because he can pick his way through the grass better than you can drag him through it.

AFTER SOME LEGAL MANEUVERS, still subject to appeal, the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission has had its authority upheld concerning the right to control introduction of new species. Such authority should be squarely on somebody's shoulders, and it would seem the Commission should have the responsibility. No matter how well-intentioned, the introduction of exotic species has been wrong more times than it has been right.

The grass carp was the subject of the November court decision. The question is whether the use of the carp should be rushed in an attempt to rid Florida waters of undesirable weed growth. It's being tested in closed research areas, and biologists still question it. It may be fine, but it needs plenty of local study. ●



Photo By Laurence Rossignol

this gem of the upper Gulf coast makes up in quality what it lacks in size

Tide Swamp Wildlife Management Area

THE TIDE SWAMP WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA is located along the Gulf coast in southwestern Taylor county, 28 miles south of Perry, Florida. The small, but popular, fishing community of Steinhatchee lies at the southern edge of the area.

The smallest of nine wildlife management areas in the Commission's Northeast Region, Tide Swamp is the perfect place to pursue hunting and salt water fishing activities, as well as other recreational favorites. Its small size—20,000 acres—belies the wildlife resources that are present. Relatively low annual hunting pressure, coupled with good deer, turkey and hog populations and excellent squirrel populations, should appeal to most every hunter who wants to get away from the city. After a day's hunt, one can travel to Steinhatchee for a seafood supper in one of several restaurants or spend the time fishing the Steinhatchee River for redfish or the Gulf flats for trout.

Tide Swamp was established in October 1964 by cooperative agreement between the Florida Game

and Fresh Water Fish Commission and Buckeye Cellulose Company. The area possesses most of the habitat types found in north Florida. At least 10,000 acres of the management area are literally a "tide swamp." It is not a true swamp but a mixture of wet hardwood hammock and cypress swamp. That occurs in one solid parcel in the northern half of the area. Tidal action is evident in portions of the swamp. This habitat type is quite unique in that it has not been disturbed to any great degree by man or machine in recent times. The only real evidences that man has entered the area are an old logging road that traverses the swamp, and huge cypress stumps left from logging activities in the early 1900's. Numerous spurs, inaccessible by vehicle, penetrate the swamp from what was once the main logging tram, known as the Tide City Mainline.

Other woodland types scattered throughout the area are pine-oak uplands, pine-palmetto flatwoods, and salt water and brackish water marshes. Vehi-

cular travel through the entire area is possible, but the road system has been left pretty much in a rugged state to encourage walk-in hunting. Without a 4-wheel drive, hunters should avoid the sandy Hickory Ridge area and the aforementioned log tram.

Tide Swamp was closed to hunting from 1964 through 1966. During this time, deer, turkey and a few black bear were restocked in the most suitable habitats. By the 1966-67 hunting season, game populations, except bear, had increased substantially, and the area was opened to hunting.

Because of the small size of the area, a still-hunting-only system was enforced initially, and continues to be in effect. The average seasonal harvest for the past 6 years has been as follows: squirrels—1200; deer—20; quail—110; turkey—25; hog—15; and ducks—175. Hunting pressure has remained light as compared to other management areas in northeast Florida. These figures appear low at first glance, but considering the small acreage in the area, hunter success is above average.

The interspersed of some top quality woodland
(Continued on next page)



Photo By Gene Smith



Photos By Laurence Rossignol

By **STEVEN K. STAFFORD**

At least half of the area's acreage is tidal swamp, opposite page, where the regular ebb and flow of Gulf's tides are apparent. Large amount of hardwood hammock, left above, provides prime squirrel hunting, as good as any in the state. Other than for traces of early day logging operations, this area has kept a lot of its primal character, above right. As the entrance sign, right, indicates, land is owned by Buckeye Cellulose Corporation, with the wildlife managed by Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission under cooperative agreement.



(Continued from preceding page)

types makes for ideal game habitat. The area now supports approximately 150 deer, 100 turkeys, and 125 hogs. The squirrel population is consistently high due to the large amount of hardwood hammock acreage.

Squirrel hunting in the area is as good as can be found anywhere in Florida. For a youngster just starting to hunt, Tide Swamp could provide a rewarding trip. An added bonus is that hogs are classified as game animals, and are numerous. Under the present regulation which prohibits dogs for hunting, hog populations should remain high. Most hunters know that good squirrel and hog hunting go hand in hand with an ample supply of acorns, hickories, and other nut-producing trees. Tide Swamp has its fair share of all, and more.

Waterfowl hunting is excellent on open marsh ponds and along the coast. One can jump shoot the small ponds scattered throughout the area, or set out decoys along the coastline.

Duck hunters are provided access to the coast from the Dallas Creek boat landing. Dallas Creek is the main tidal creek in the area. It meanders through marshland into lowland hammocks where it arises. Fishermen are able to use the Dallas Creek road and boat landing throughout the year, but the road is considered unimproved at best, and the creek is suitable only for smaller craft.

Camping during the fall hunting season is allowed at Dallas Creek and Bradley Springs Park campsites, which are maintained by Buckeye Cellulose Company and intended to be undeveloped in nature.

After the fall hunting season, a special spring gobbler hunt will be held, March 22 through April 6. Fall turkey hunting was not allowed on the area, in an attempt to better manage the existing turkey population. Prior to the fall general hunting season, the area was opened for a special archery hunt,

in September. Legal game during the archery hunt was buck deer, hogs, and small game.

In addition to hunting and fishing, Tide Swamp offers an ideal outdoor laboratory for botanists and bird watchers. Most of the trees and shrubs common to north Florida can be found here. It's not unusual to find ash, hickory, maple, hop hornbeam, and several oaks on the same sites. The coastal marshes are alive with herons, egrets, anhingas, and other wading birds. These marshes are the vital link to maintaining good populations of shorebirds in Florida. The bald eagle, osprey, and several species of hawks are also found in the area.

Habitat management is mainly one of preserving

Photo By William A. Greer



Photo By Laurence Rossignol





The osprey, opposite page, top, is among the great variety of birds found on area. Access to the Gulf is provided by the Dallas Creek road and boat landing, left, below. The road is considered unimproved at best. Camping, above, is allowed on the area during the hunting season at both Dallas Creek and Bradley Springs Park sites—undeveloped camp grounds maintained by Buckeye. Controlled burning, at right, is one of the timber management practices that is beneficial to area's wildlife.

This is No. 9 in a series of articles on Florida Wildlife Management Areas. Maps and regulations on individual areas are available from regional offices and from the Game & Fresh Water Fish Commission, 620 S. Meridian Street, Tallahassee, Florida 32304.



Photos By Laurence Rossignol

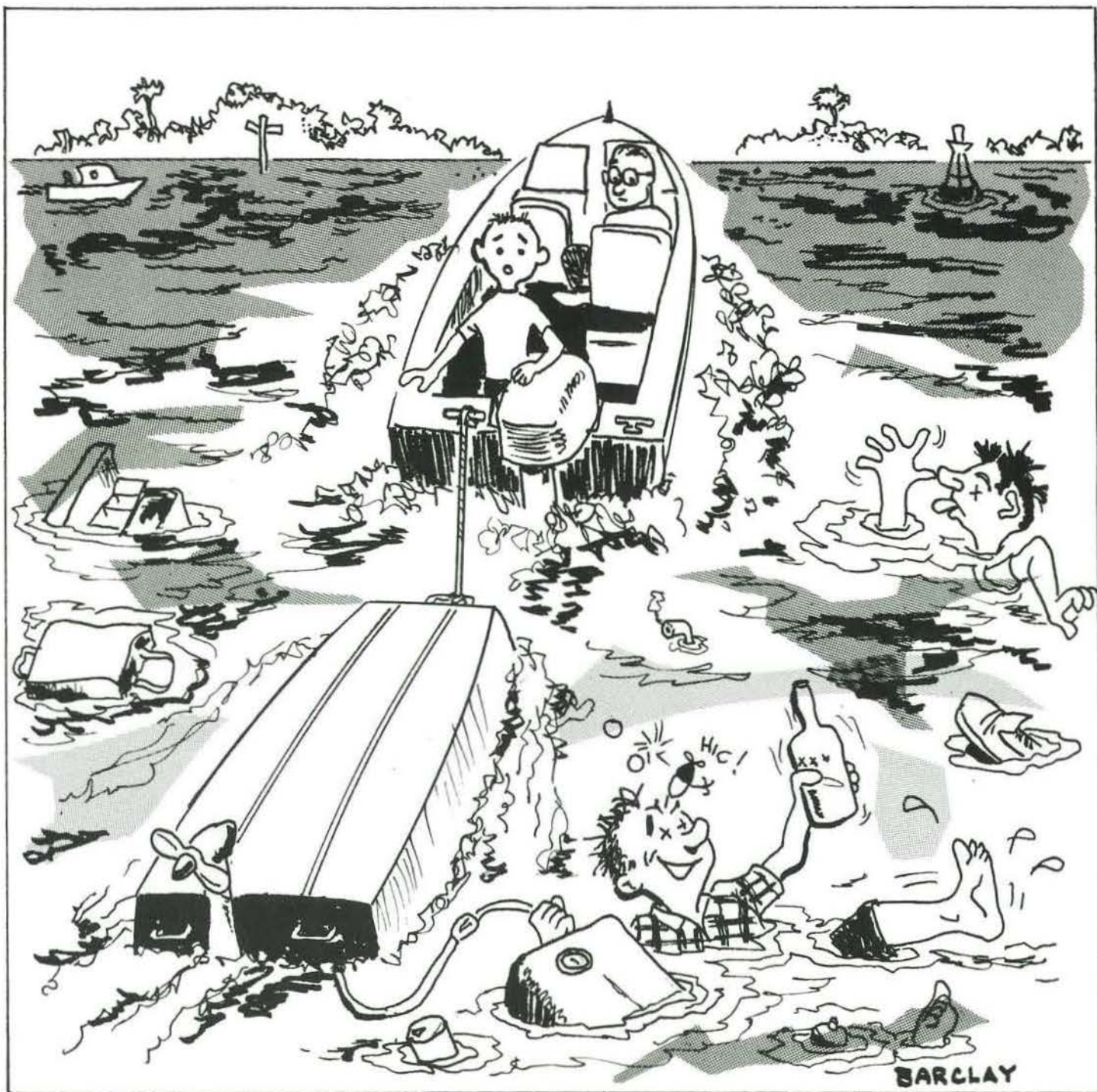
the optimum woodland types that exist. Because of the high quality of existing hammock and swamps, no game food and cover development program is necessary. Blasting potholes in the marsh to attract waterfowl has been done on a limited basis, but the program is considered experimental. The landowners give primary consideration to preserving the hammock hardwoods on the area, to insure that game populations do not suffer.

Most of the timber management activities are conducted on marginal areas in upland pine-oak woodlands. Practices such as controlled burning, chopping, and discing are conducted by the landowners in efforts to improve timberland. These practices are generally beneficial to wildlife species present. The Commission and the landowners are presently exploring the possibility of enhancing a

portion of the area for waterfowl and fishery resources. This would add another recreational dimension to the area.

Tide Swamp may be small, remote, and rather undeveloped, but it has a wealth of recreational opportunity. Few areas in the state can claim both primitiveness and uniqueness in varied recreational opportunities as this area can.

The Tide Swamp Wildlife Management Area is part of a program that makes some 5 million acres available for public hunting. With few exceptions, these lands are private property on which the sportsman is a guest of the landowner. In the interest of insuring the availability of these lands for future hunting, the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission urges that you always respect the rights of the landowner and conduct yourself appropriately. ●



a boater never knows what emergency he'll face next

Bottoms Up!

By GEORGE RUSSELL

RUSTY AND I WILL ALWAYS WONDER whether the dubious duo we found capsized in the middle of Tampa Bay were fishing with plastic worms from a tiny river john boat because they were inebriated, or did they just wash out to Egmont

Key after getting bombed in the Hillsborough River?

Rusty was nine at the time (Saturday, November 17, 1973), and now that the shock of the experience is over, his dad feels that the boy

had a valuable crash course in boating safety, and how *not* to be a boatman, during the fantastic 2 hours that followed our discovery.

Yarns by fishermen and boatmen should be considered with skepticism, but, fortunately, the following true, incredible sequence was witnessed by an unimpeachable skipper who stood by in the best tradition as the semi-comic, but highly dangerous, tableau unfolded. The helpful skipper was former Yacht Club Commodore Otto Krauss, owner of the 45-foot yacht *Dana*.

This story deserves telling because it dramatizes the fact that casual pleasure boaters may at any time be faced with totally atypical emergency circumstances not specifically covered by any basic rules of boating safety. It is also a classic case of irresponsible behavior. The names have not been changed to protect the guilty.

Here's what happened:

Our boat is a sturdy 15-footer powered by a 40-horsepower Johnson. As we left Egmont Key to return home via the Fort DeSoto Park launching ramp, we headed northeast across the widest part of Tampa Bay (from Southwest Pass) for the most direct access to the channel paralleling the Sunshine Skyway. I gave Rusty the wheel as part of his basic training, because of unobstructed view, calm water, and a total absence of boat traffic. About 3 miles distant there appeared to be a green boat. I suggested that he steer for the boat rather than attempt to cope with a compass.

When we arrived at the green boat, we came upon a startling scene. A 12-foot, freshwater-type metal hull was capsized—the foot of an 8½ horsepower motor pointing skyward. Bobbing around the boat were such articles as shoes, fishing plugs of the freshwater variety (even plastic worms), beer cans, torn life preservers, and what appeared to be a half empty Vodka bottle. The debris included a pipe, an overturned tackle box, a dip net, and a gas can.

We were greeted by an apparently unconcerned pair, two fellows in their forties who were lolling around the overturned motor showing no apparent discomfort even though one had a fishing lure impaled in his flesh. They suggested that I just stand by a minute or two “while we turn this (expletive deleted) over and buzz out of here.”

It was apparent that both were in an exceedingly advanced state of inebriation. We tried to make them realize that the only safe thing to do was to board our boat and let us tow the remains of their craft 5 miles or more to the nearest shore. They refused this advice firmly and obscenely.

After some persuasion they did agree to allow me to throw them a valued 50-foot nylon line, which was then snatched out of my hand and gleefully tossed away. The line sank.

It was necessary to explain to Rusty that despite

the condition and attitude of the men, they were in grave danger and we had no choice but to attempt to save them. After much coaxing and more abuse, we did get “George” aboard while “Fred” swam nonchalantly away to recover the Vodka bottle. About that time, George decided that Fred was in danger and dove overboard without warning.

Twice they righted their craft and attempted to board it swamped—which was, of course, futile since bailing was the equivalent of trying to bail out Tampa Bay. We finally persuaded Fred to tie our anchor line to the swamped craft, while George hung on our motor, making it impossible to start up. It took another 10 minutes or so to convince George to join Fred at the stern of the swamped boat, hanging on to the remote tank, connected only by the fuel line to the motor.

At last, we were able to begin this fantastic water skiing expedition at about two knots. Rusty was urged to watch them uninterrupted, for if either dropped off, the possibility of loss of life was very real. It was about 30 minutes before we reached the ship channel, where we were able to flag down the *Dana*.

I shouted a description of our plight to Skipper Krauss, which action produced more verbal abuse from the reluctant rescuers. The yacht properly inquired whether or not I wanted him to call the Coast Guard. This suggestion brought another torrent of invective. I yelled “no” while nodding yes, for fear that our guests would desert us out of spite.

It was another 5 minutes or so before we tried to gain the beach alongside the Fort DeSoto pier. Pier fishermen also witnessed the spectacle.

Nearing shore, with anger mounting, I made the mistake of asking the yacht to call the park authorities. George and Fred responded by swimming away from the swamped boat in tow. I tried to explain that I only wanted to notify my wife that I would be late, and tossed them life preservers. They were courteous enough to rejoin the caravan.

When we finally made the beach, there was unprintable language both ways. I resisted the temptation to report them in order to avoid an altercation, which would only have prolonged the agony.

The danger of drowning had been very real because Fred and George were obviously much more physically exhausted than they believed. Chances are, as they dimly recall the incident, all it amounted to was about 10 minutes of fun and games in some sheltered bayou.

Rusty and I went by the yacht to offer our thanks and to explain the full details of how this scenario had come about. All aboard agreed that we had had no choice but to save the men regardless of how frustrating the situation proved.

The purpose of our outing had been to relax before an important out-of-town business meeting.

Thanks a heap, George and Fred! ●

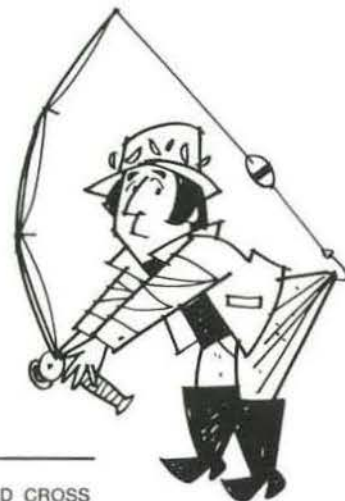
RED CROSS SUGGESTS SAFETY ANGLES FOR ANGLERS



That time is here again, so the American Red Cross is offering suggestions to keep fishermen from hooking themselves and others, or suffering more tragic accidents, as they wade into the fishing season.

To help prevent drownings and other accidents among the nation's amateur Izaak Waltons, the Red Cross recommends these pointers:

1. All fishermen should know how to swim, know how to give first aid, and remember to carry a first aid kit with them on fishing trips.
2. Fishing enthusiasts should listen to weather forecasts and not go on the water when threatening weather is forecast.
3. Fishhooks can catch anglers as well as fish, so fishermen should carry needlenose pliers, wire cutters, and a pocketknife in tackle boxes. Always keep hooks in covered containers.
4. When casting, anglers should make certain there is room to do so without hooking someone else. Always look before casting and use an overhead cast while in a boat with others.
5. If you go on a fishing trip alone, leave word where you will be and when you plan to return. However, it is much safer to fish with a companion.
6. Stay away from water where there are swimmers, water skiers, and skin and scuba divers.
7. Along the shore, wade cautiously to avoid slipping on hidden rocks or stepping unexpectedly into deep water.
8. Learn how to hold a fish properly while extracting a hook. Many species of fish have sharp teeth or fins that can cause painful hand wounds.
9. If you snag yourself deeply with a hook, cut off the line, bandage the wound, and go immediately to the nearest doctor or hospital. Don't risk further injury trying to remove a deeply imbedded hook.
10. When fishing in channels or rivers, never tie your boat to channel buoys, which are traffic markers and must be kept clear.
11. Never stand up in a boat while fishing, and always have a properly approved personal flotation device for every person.
12. While fishing from the bank in snake-infested country, watch where you step and sit and what you touch. Wear high boots, because most snake bites are below the midcalf.



THE AMERICAN NATIONAL RED CROSS

THE WHITE BASS-STRIPED BASS hybrid produced at the Commission's Richloam hatchery has become well established in a number of Florida lakes. At Lake Thonotosassa in Hillsborough County, hybrids in their second year measure up to 19 inches in length and weigh as much as 3 pounds. This new "homemade" fishery will be a put-and-take proposition since it is unlikely the hybrid will reproduce in Florida waters. Numbers sufficient for adequate stocking, however, can be produced with existing hatchery facilities without undue cost or restriction of other fish production activities.

Although there is no minimum length requirement, the Commission has recently set the bag limit at 6 hybrids per day. Lakes where this bag limit applies include: Lake Victor in Holmes County, Cherry Lake in Madison County, Lake Thonotosassa in Hillsborough County, Lake Mangonia in Palm Beach County, lakes Griffin and Eustis in Lake County, and lakes Parker, Scott, Gibson, Bonny, Morton, the Winter Haven Chain of Lakes, Crystal Lake, and Eagle Lake in Polk County.

Hybrids in lakes Griffin and Harris average 15 inches and in Lake Thonotosassa some 17 inches. Cherry Lake's first year hybrids are running about 11½ inches average length. Reports from lakes Griffin and Harris on first year fish indicate a good abundance of specimens above 10 inches in length.

FLORIDA FISHERMEN AND BOATERS are reminded that a new boat registration law went into effect on January 1. The law, which pertains to all the states, requires that any boat propelled by machinery must be registered.

Originally, the law required registration only of boats which used an engine of 10 horsepower or larger. That ruling exempted some boats and canoes using the smaller engines. Under the new regulation, all of these, including the electric motor powered craft, must be registered.

AS FAR AS WE HAVE BEEN ABLE to determine, bass fishing tournaments have not been detrimental to Florida largemouth populations," John Woods, Fisheries Division chief recently reported.

Steve Smith, in charge of the Commission's largemouth bass investigations program, has been assigned to keep an official eye on the big tournaments. On the basis of his observations, he favors continuation of the live-release of tournament-caught bass. He does not, however, support the idea of stocking fingerling or subadult largemouth to replace fish removed by tournament fishermen.

There is no indication that this is necessary, Smith contends.

Some tournament sponsors have expressed a desire to contribute financially to the Commission's conservation efforts, Woods pointed out. He also expressed the opinion that the Commission can establish any rules necessary to protect the fish, but it is possible that additional legislation may be necessary to protect the fishermen. This aspect of the matter is being investigated by the Commission staff.

THE ADAGE ABOUT THE EYE being bigger than the stomach proved disastrously true for one particular Florida largemouth bass. Fish Management Specialist Ken Jones was recently sampling the fish population on Lake Thonotosassa, near Tampa, when a 7 pound bass bobbed to the surface near his boat. When the bass didn't attempt to escape, Jones picked the fish out of the water.

He found the bass had a 1-pound tilapia lodged in its mouth. According to Jones, the dorsal fin of the tilapia was angled in such a manner that neither fish could free itself after the strike. The result was that the bass, unable to get oxygen through his gills, died of suffocation.

RUNNING A CATFISH TROTLINE is an acceptable nocturnal activity for most hunters who camp near a lake, river or stream. However, you have to know more than how to bait a hook if you're going to operate a trotline in Florida's fresh waters. There are several rules which trotline fishermen must observe.

Basically, a trotline used for taking nongame fish for personal use is a length of line from which are suspended no more than 25 hooks. If two or more anglers are fishing from the same boat, each is allowed one trotline; however, the lines may not be joined to create a trotline with more than 25 hooks.

Each fisherman must possess a sport fishing license, and each trotline must be marked with the angler's name and the number of his fishing license. Trotlines must be run at least once every 48 hours. Trotlines and bush hooks, or setlines, sometimes are abandoned and can become traps, either for wildlife or for boaters. Only nongame fish may be taken on trotlines, and they may be baited only with cut bait or other substances, not including live fish or any part of any game fish. Rules governing trotlining vary from one body of water to another, so it is imperative that fishermen check their summary of fresh water fishing regulations before they start making plans to wet 25 hooks. ●



Photo By Wallace Hughes

EMERGING FROM THE OKEFENOKEE SWAMP in Georgia and flowing southward through Florida for 207 miles to the Gulf of Mexico, the river made famous by Stephen Foster's melody passes through stages of varying character; an acidic swamp creek, torrential stream with rocky shoals, meandering river, extensive coastal swamps, and, finally, an estuary. The Withlacoochee, Alapaha, and Santa Fe Rivers contribute their waters to the Suwannee, which drains approximately 4,200 square miles in Florida.

Due to extreme geological differences encountered along the course of the river, it is desirable to divide its length into three ecological areas; upper, central, and lower. The upper sector extends southward from the Georgia line to Luraville, the central portion from Luraville to the town of Suwannee River (Fannin Springs), and the lower section from Fannin Springs to the Gulf of Mexico. The Withlacoochee and Alapaha Rivers flow into the upper sector, and the Santa Fe enters the Suwannee near the midpoint of the central portion.

The sport fishery in the Suwannee has been previously described by Lake and Stream Survey Team No. 2 (1964) of the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission. Their work was summarized in *FLORIDA WILDLIFE* by Hester and Smith (1964). Additional information pertinent to the biology of the river system has been collected by Cox (1970, 1971, 1972), Bass and Hitt (1971, 1973), and the Florida State Board of Health (1965, 1966).

its tranquil beauty and its fish lure
boaters to the song-famed . . .

Suwannee River

The upper portion of the river is characterized by numerous rocky shoals, swift-flowing waters, and steep, nearly vertical banks. Water level fluctuations here are very great. Water marks on cypress trees along the banks are often 30 to 40 feet above the river during low water periods. The frequent shoals are hazardous to the unwary boater. The most dangerous of them is Big Shoal, located several miles upstream from the town of White Springs. It is almost impassable even at high water levels. Downstream from the shoals, eddies and pockets of slow-moving water are formed by fallen trees and limestone outcrops. These areas offer good fishing, for they provide good places for fish to hide and rest.

Food is also washed into the eddies for waiting fish. Optimum fishing for redbreast, shellcracker, largemouth bass and other sunfish occurs during periods of low water. When water levels begin to rise, catfish begin to be caught and may be caught throughout the high water periods.

There are relatively few springs in the upper portion of the Suwannee, and most of the river is drained from the Okefenokee Swamp. This dark, swamp-derived water is acidic and does not favor the production of the large fish populations found in the less acidic waters of the lower sections of the river.

A wider, more slowly moving river is found in the central section of the Suwannee. There are fewer shoals, less steeply inclined sandy banks, and fewer limestone outcrops. The water quality of this portion of the Suwannee is enhanced by the numerous springs and spring runs along the banks. Many of the springs are popular swimming and picnicking sites. A few, such as Fannin Springs, teem with fish and other aquatic life.

The central sector is less acidic than the upper, and maintains good fish populations. Good fishing may be found around the mouths of the numerous springs where fish often congregate. Large numbers

of bass and redbreast may spawn in several of these springs and spring runs in late winter, spring, and early summer. Areas of aquatic vegetation found in the gentle bends of the river are fish food producers and also provide cover. Fish are caught regularly in their vicinity. Fallen trees are much more abundant, and some of the best fishing may be found around them. Deep holes along the banks in which trees have fallen produce large shellcrackers, redbreast, and largemouth bass.

Suwannee bass, smaller cousins of the largemouth, are occasionally caught. These strikingly marked bass are endemic to the Suwannee and Ochlockonee watersheds and are noted for their fighting ability. They also rate as table fare.

Sloughs, swamps and several short canals offer spawning habitat in this portion of the river. A canal on the west bank at Fannin Springs (near town of Suwannee River) has produced large bass in the spring. Another good fishing area is around the mouth of the Santa Fe River as it enters the Suwannee.

The Santa Fe River drains approximately 1,080 square miles along its 70-mile length, and flows in a westerly direction from its headwaters in Santa
(Continued on next page)

Canoeing a stretch of quiet water, left, at Florida Sheriffs Boys Ranch, north of Live Oak. Swift-flowing water and numerous rocky shoals characterize upper river, at right. Shown is scene at Suwannee River State Park.

By VINARD HITT

A guide to the Suwannee River system was published by the Fla. Game & Fresh Water Fish Commission in 1964. It is no longer available, but requests for copies are still received. This article updates the earlier publication, and will be made available as a reprint, along with redrawn maps of the river system showing boat ramps and other features.



Photo By Gene Smith

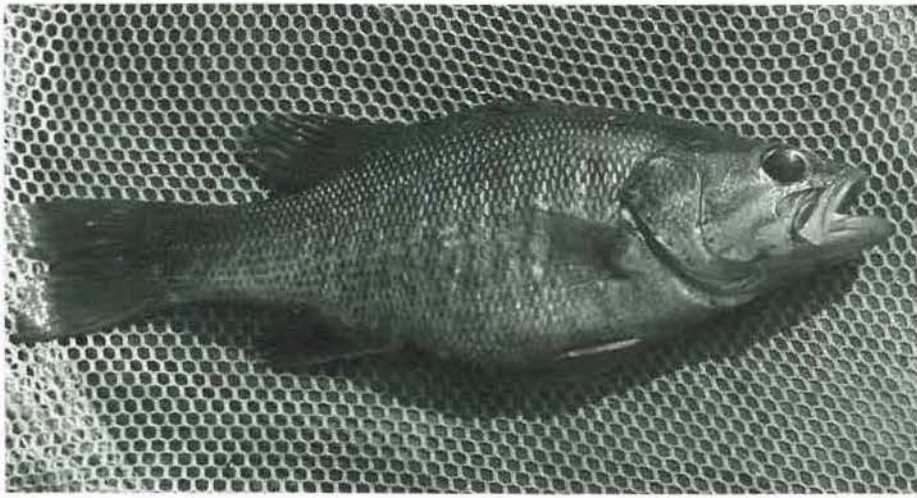


Photo By Laurence Rossignol

Suwannee bass, left, is a rare species found in north Florida and south Georgia. Boating party, below, seen at dock at White Springs. High banks and fluctuating water levels are the rule in this section. Tubing, seen above right, is a favorite sport on Ichetucknee River, a Suwannee tributary. A spread out water course, slower current, and wide flood plain mark lower end of the Suwannee, below right.

(Continued from preceding page)

Fe Lake to confluence with the Suwannee near Branford. Midway along its course, at O'Leno State Park, the Santa Fe sinks underground and rises about 2 miles away near the town of High Springs. This sink divides the river into two distinct geological areas. New River and Olustee Creek contribute their waters to the upper portion, which is characterized by steep banks, slow-moving, dark waters, and a sandy bottom. The lower section features more gently sloping banks, swifter currents, and limestone substrates.

The Santa Fe is generally a moderate to slowly flowing stream, with many meandering curves. However, there are several rocky shoals between High Springs and Hollingsworth Bluff. Many springs emptying into the lower Santa Fe, especially the Ichetucknee River, help to keep the river clear during periods of low rainfall.

There appears to be a larger percentage of harvestable size game fish in the Santa Fe than in most areas of the Suwannee. Shellcracker, redbreast, stumpknocker, largemouth bass, and Suwannee bass are abundant. Shellcrackers weighing more than 1 pound are not uncommon and occasionally a 2-pounder is creeled.

Deep holes, fallen trees, aquatic vegetation, and frequently flooded lowlands provide excellent fish habitat. Slow-moving currents and clean, sandy bottoms are conducive to spawning activities. Beds of spawning fish have been observed from the mouth region up to the Ichetucknee River and far upstream. The Santa Fe River provides excellent spawning grounds for fish.

Moving from the central Suwannee and Santa Fe to the lower stretches of the Suwannee River, we find a greatly widened water course and less swift current. In the lower 30 miles of the Suwannee, increased aquatic vegetation, a few large springs, a wide flood plain, and numerous creeks intermingle to create a variety of fish habitats. Fishing is often very good in this portion of the river, which produces unusually large stump-



Florida Department of Commerce Photos

knockers. The many creeks and sloughs of this area provide good spawning habitats. In the region of the mouth itself, bass fishing is excellent, and numerous marine fish from the Gulf of Mexico such as sea trout and redfish are available to the sportsman. Large areas of exposed sandy banks are found along central and lower stretches of the Suwannee. These open areas are easily accessible, and many people fish and picnic in their vicinity. However, catch rates in open sandy areas are generally poor. Better fishing is found in areas of cover where fish can hide.

Varied and sometimes conflicting recreational interests are offered by the Suwannee and its tributaries. Fishing, boating, skiing, tubing, and scuba diving are among the most popular activities pur-



Florida Department of Natural Resources Photo



sued by outdoor enthusiasts. Most of this activity takes place on the central and lower sections of the Suwannee and along the lower Santa Fe. Limited access to the upper sectors restricts activity there to swimming and fishing.

Scuba divers utilize the rivers extensively. Indian artifacts, old bottles, and fossils are found in quantities sufficient to make diving productive. Diving clubs from distant points across the U.S. come to the many springs in the area in order to certify new members. Most of the springs have subterranean passages and caves which should be avoided by all but the most experienced cave divers. River diving also has its hazards. Monofilament line and trotlines discarded by fishermen can entangle divers. Surfacing in mid-river is extremely dangerous since high speed boats are common, especially during summer weekends, and their operators are seldom aware of divers. Use a diving flag.

Boating and skiing compete with fishing as the most popular pastimes enjoyed by those who use the river. The scenic qualities of the Suwannee and Santa Fe draw boating clubs from all over Florida and south Georgia. Fishing may be difficult when large numbers of pleasure boats are on the river; the choppy wakes generated by these boats are hazardous and annoying to those who fish from small craft. Boat wakes are also eroding the banks in places, thus destroying aesthetic quality and, at

(Continued on next page)

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times, increasing the turbidity of the water. Shoals and shallow water limit most of the traffic of larger boats to the area downstream from Branford on the Suwannee and downstream from the Ichetucknee on the Santa Fe. Skiing is quite common on the Suwannee and is fairly safe. However, skiing can be extremely dangerous on the Santa Fe and is not recommended because of the narrow, tortuous course, sharp curves, and sunken snags. Boats towing skiers often meet as they simultaneously round curves from opposite directions. Serious injuries and severely damaged boats have resulted from these unfortunate encounters.

Swimming and tubing are more popular along the crystal clear, spring-fed Ichetucknee than the Santa Fe or Suwannee. Tubers usually embark at the head of the spring and drift downstream with the current some 3½ miles to the Department of Transportation park at the crossing of Highway 27. The quiet stillness and pristine beauty of the unspoiled river swamp make this 3-hour trip a most enjoyable one. The section of the Ichetucknee between U.S. 27 and the head springs was recently acquired by the Division of Recreation and Parks. The gates open at 8 a.m. and close at sundown. Vessels with engines are restricted from the park.

Canoeing is also becoming quite popular in the Suwannee watershed. Canoe enthusiasts often plan week-long outings on the Suwannee. An enjoyable trip would be from the head springs of the Ichetucknee down to the Santa Fe and then on down to the Suwannee. This 15 mile jaunt can easily be made in one day.

Although two other types of canepole techniques are often employed, local sportsmen generally use the traditional cane pole and worms when fishing in the Suwannee. One of the other successful and popular methods is called throw-fishing. A limber pole of good length (10 to 12 feet) and a strong monofilament line equal to the length of the pole are used. Either sinking or floating artificial bugs are employed as anglers drift the river flipping the lure beneath low hanging limbs along the bank. Fine strings of fish, especially redbreast, are taken in this manner. Another method is called jigger fishing. Here the fisherman uses a long, stout pole with a strong length of cord about a foot long. A bucktail and spinner combination usually terminates the rig. The lure is worked at the surface around stumps and trees with a rapid, jerking motion. Some of the better strings of largemouth bass are taken this way. Spin fishing or casting with top water plugs during the low water periods of spring and fall also produce good catches of bass.

A wide variety of live baits are used by the Suwannee angling fraternity. Included are earthworms, crickets, bonnet worms, oak worms, catalpa worms, larvae of wasps and yellow jackets, and minnows. Large stringers of redbreast and shell-

cracker are caught on earthworms, and some hefty bass are caught on minnows. An excellent bait for largemouth bass is golden shiners. Frequent occurrence of crayfish in the diet of Suwannee bass suggests them as an excellent bait.

Catfish may usually be caught late in the evening or at night. As mentioned, rising or high water levels are best for catfish. Many types of bait are commonly used. Trot lines and set hooks are also offered to these delectable fish. Cut bait, worms, pieces of soap, and various blood baits are most commonly used. Trot lines and set hooks are also utilized. They are limited by law to 25 hooks per sport license, and live bait may not be used. Unattended set hooks should be removed; they become dangerous to other fishermen. Rapid changes of water level often leave old set hooks dangling above the surface of the river.

Fishing success generally improves as one progresses downstream. As the river widens, currents are slower and habitat improves. Commonly caught fishes are largemouth bass, shellcracker (redeer), redbreast, bluegill, stumpknocker, and channel catfish. Suwannee bass, black crappie, pickerel, and white catfish are occasionally taken by the Suwannee angler.

Tagged "redbelly" by most fishermen, the redbreast sunfish is the most common species found in the Suwannee River drainage. More elongated than most of its cousins, the redbreast is easily identifiable by its long, black opercular flaps (which are not marginated with light blue as are those of the longear sunfish). Equally as colorful as other sunfish, the redbreast is olive to brownish-gray

Photo By Wallace Hughes



above, merging into blue with a golden overcast along the sides, and bright orange to yellow underneath. Several irregular bluish stripes are located on the head between the mouth and the eye. A large redbreast reaches 8 inches in length and 1 pound in weight, though 5 inches is the average size.



Photo By Jud Fulmer

The Suwannee bass is a small form of the black bass and is considered rare. It is endemic to north Florida and south Georgia, and is common only in the swift, rocky stretches of the Ichetucknee and lower Santa Fe rivers. First recognized as a species in 1949, the Suwannee bass closely resembles its first cousin, the northern smallmouth. In neither the Suwannee nor the smallmouth does the upper jaw extend behind the eye. Chunkier and smaller than its long-jawed second cousin, the familiar largemouth bass, the Suwannee is usually blue beneath, and most specimens are marked with dark, diamond-shaped blotches along the sides. A small form, the largest Suwannee bass on record weighed $3\frac{1}{2}$ pounds and measured $16\frac{1}{2}$ inches in total length.

Even though real estate does not come cheaply along the Suwannee and Santa Fe, development is accelerating rapidly. Much of this development is being done with little regard toward the delicate ecological relationships existing between the rivers and the springs and sloughs which occur along their courses. The upper portions of the rivers are not yet under intensive development. Should the demand for space for streamside cottages continue to increase, development of the upper sections may be expected. The Suwannee River system is among the most unpolluted river systems in the eastern United States. Should it be subjected to the ravages of urban and industrial wastes, its excellent sport fishery would most likely decline. Suitable habitat and high water quality must be sustained in order to preserve the excellent sport fishery and the numerous recreational opportunities afforded by the Suwannee River and its tributaries. ●

Photo By Wallace Hughes

The redbreast sunfish, or "redbelly," left, is the most common species of the Suwannee drainage. A fine mixed string of bream and catfish, above. Action on the river, right; another one for the stringer—if he doesn't come unhooked before this lucky angler can hoist him aboard!



attention to details pays
off in turkey hunting

To Bag A Spring Gobbler



Photo By Lovett Williams

SOME REASONABLY SAVVY HUNTERS who manage to bag their share of game during the regular fall and winter season seem to drop out of the race when the spring gobbler hunt comes along. Why this should be, I don't rightly know. Maybe it's because the open dates usually come during shirt sleeve weather, amidst blooming flowers and balmy zephyrs which make it seem not at all a proper time to be hunting. (And in case you hadn't noticed, attitude does play an important part in a hunter's success.) Or maybe it's because the birds act differently than in the spring, and many hunters just haven't taken the time to figure out what makes this highly-prized, feathered big game trophy tick. The seasonal ague coursing the bloodstream of a big tom definitely changes his personality. Recognize this fact, and exploit it, and you're on your way to success as a spring turkey hunter.

I once read a statement that a wild turkey is not so much super-intelligent as he is super-cautious. There is a lot of truth to that, and even when his mind is on those special springtime affairs, the gobbler is ever alert to possible danger.

A successful spring gobbler hunt is not an especially involved operation. Careful attention to details of equipment and procedures, however, can mean the difference between success and failure.

In the matter of clothing, the camouflaged outfits that are now widely available are a good choice. Either the coveralls or a camouflaged shirt or jacket coupled with a pair of dark trousers will do it. A face net—the camouflaged kind of mosquito netting—is a little item that can make a big difference. If you have never paid much attention to the matter, take the opportunity to observe how, from a distance, a person's face almost shines in contrast with the more subdued hues of the natural background of the woods. To the keen eyes of a really skittish turkey, that light-reflecting face flashes like a fluorescent warning signal. Camouflaged gloves, either the light netting kind or heavier, more conventional type, depending on the weather, may be an important item under some conditions. A camouflaged or neutral-colored cap or hat to top off your outfit and you're ready to blend into the shrubbery.

When you are using a log, downed tree top, or a sparse patch of brush for a blind, completely covering your face and hands will add the finishing touch to your camouflage, and if you hold perfectly still, even a wise old gobbler may walk up to spitting distance if you give him the chance.

Of course, there have been plenty of turkeys bagged by hunters who have never used or even

heard of a face net, or bothered with camouflaged clothing and the like. But an outdoorsman who is serious about his turkey hunting takes advantage of every possible aid to get the edge on his quarry. It's a lot more sport to outwit a leery old gobbler than to lean on sheer blind luck to put you close to an occasional bird that drops his guard long enough to bumble into shotgun range.

A 12-gauge shotgun with full choke, using magnum loads and number 4 shot, is a good choice for spring turkey hunting. Make certain you pattern your gun with the load you are going to use, at any rate. You may find that 5's or 6's pattern better in your gun. What you want is a good dense pattern that will put as many shot as possible into the head and upper neck, which is the proper area to direct your shot on a standing bird.

Generally speaking, there are three basic methods of getting the drop on a trophy tom. One is to locate him by his gobbling, then go to him or lure him to you. The second is to roost him and take him when he flies down or else call him in after he gets on the ground. The third way is to locate the feeding grounds of local flocks and wait them out.

Weather can have considerable effect on the peak of gobbling activity. A stretch of unseasonably cold weather can slow up the action, while an unusually warm, balmy stretch can kick up the pace. Since,

of necessity, the season is set months in advance, it doesn't always come right at the peak of gobbling activity. At least in central Florida, however, it has come close during recent seasons.

A windless morning is the best time to locate a gobbling bird. It is amazing how the sound will carry on the still, damp air. A half mile or even more is not too unusual when conditions are right. A lot depends on the cover, too. A few hundred yards of heavy timber and brush makes a pretty effective sound absorber. On the other hand, if you are on a ridge in hilly country, you can sometimes hear a bird gobbling a mile off.

The first hour of daylight is worth all the rest of the day, as far as locating a gobbling tom. This holds on cloudy days as well as clear ones. On overcast days, however, the birds have a tendency to continue sounding off much later in the morning, so even until 10 or 11 o'clock you have a good chance of sounding one out. This doesn't mean that they don't gobble at all later on in the day, but the early hours are definitely best. Windy mornings are not very productive. The birds seem even more jittery than usual, and even if one gobbles he has to be almost in your pocket for you to hear him. A light, misty rain doesn't seem to slow down activity too much, but a heavy downpour not only makes it next to impossible to hear well but actually seems to keep gobbling down to nearly nothing.

Once you have determined the direction of a gobbling bird, if conditions are suitable for it, move
(Continued on next page)

By WILLIAM "QUEET" BOYETT



A gobbler, opposite page, will sometimes flap his wings and hop about like a frisky colt—either to stretch his muscles, or maybe just because he's feeling good. Watching a well-used feeding area, left, can be worthwhile, if you supplement the intrigue of food with judicious calling.

Photo By Morrie Naggiar



The cedar box call, left, is author's favorite, made by Lynch. Peek hole with movable cover allows hunter to keep track of the action in front of his wood panel blind, below, with less chance of being spotted. A big gobbler gets that way by being alert.

(Continued from preceding page)

fast but quietly to within 400 yards or so of where you believe the bird to be.

With a minimum of noise, take a stand in a convenient patch of gallberry, palmetto or the like, or perhaps at the base of a large tree, or in the roots of an uprooted stump. A stand located at the edge of a clearing or under a tree canopy where there is a minimum of underbrush will give you a better chance for a clear shot. Having bushes, a tree, or other good screen at your back will help break up your outline. Settle down comfortably, in a position where you can bring your gun to bear with a minimum of floundering about. This is an important point, for once you have the bird coming to you, it is too late to make adjustments in your position.

Now yelp a few times with your call, then keep quiet. Too much calling will definitely spook a skittish old tom. If you haven't had a response within 10 or 15 minutes, yelp again four or five times. Don't be in too much of a hurry to leave the spot. Often a gobbler will make an appearance long after he has answered your call. Now and again he may show as long as a half hour after your last yelp.

Once he is in range, wait for the right moment to get your gun to your shoulder. He will probably have his head down, now and again pecking at the ground, or perhaps he will move behind a tree or dense shrub. Get your gun up, and if you must stand up to get a good shot, come up slowly and quietly as possible. Be ready when the bird again moves into view. Aim carefully at the head and upper neck area, and touch her off. Get to your bird fast when you put him down, and get your hands on him. It's a mighty disappointing experience to watch a "dead" gobbler suddenly come to and race off through the brush, and I've seen it happen more than once over the years.

One type of blind that I have used successfully when the conditions are right consists of a couple of 3-foot square wooden panels held together with



a pair of hinges with readily removable pins so they can be taken apart easily for moving. I use old lumber that is well weathered. Sheets of masonite or painted plywood would work as well. Tack or staple palmetto fronds, gallberry branches, or the like over the panel as camouflage. Cut a peep-hole at a convenient height so you can see through it easily when sitting in the blind. Provide it with a swinging piece that can be used to close the hole



Photos By Morrie Naggier

when not in use. When set up at the edge of a brush patch, the panels blend into the background so well it is difficult to detect the blind from any distance.

This type of blind is perhaps more useful during the fall hunt when you can set it up, for instance, overlooking an oak ridge where birds are working regularly on the fallen acorns. In this case, you can go to the site during midday, get your blind set up—sometimes there is brush cutting and banging around involved—and then come back in the early morning or late afternoon feeding periods. But even during the spring hunt, the panel blind is useful if you pick a good feeding area where the turkeys are working. A bit of judicious yelping will help the cause too. With a comfortable camp stool behind a good blind like this, you can move, carefully, to stretch cramped legs without much chance of spooking an incoming bird. Incidentally, a good, sturdy camp stool is a great addition to your collection of hunting gear. In fact, I consider it practically indispensable for turkey hunting.

Again, when your gobbler is in position for a shot, come up slow and easy when the bird's head is down or it is behind an obstruction. Jumping up quickly almost guarantees that the bird will flush immediately, and there is a good chance he will go out with a tree between him and the blind.

Roosting a turkey is one of the most productive ways of putting a bird in the bag. Weather conditions must be favorable to accomplish it, though. An evening with little or no wind is needed, for it is mainly by the sound of their flying up to their night's resting place that gives them away. If you can locate the late afternoon feeding grounds of a turkey flock, the odds are falling in your favor.

Usually, the birds do not travel far from the place where they end up the day's feeding. If there are tall pines or perhaps a cypress head close to the feeding area, this is a likely prospect for a turkey roost.

Move carefully, with a minimum of disturbance, into the area about an hour before dark, and take a stand in a brush patch or other convenient cover where you are out of sight but can see and hear well. Somewhere around the time "it starts getting dark under the table," as the saying goes, you may hear the flapping of wings as a bird flies up to the roost. It's a distinctive sound that you are not likely to mistake for anything else. Give the birds time to settle down, and if you have not seen them from your stand, work slowly and carefully in the direction of the sound.

A pair of binoculars can be a big help in spotting the roosting birds without approaching too close. Look carefully in the upper parts of pines, cypress, or other large trees in the area. Once you have the birds spotted, and the location tied down in your mind, back off quietly and depart. Once they are settled for the night, it is unlikely that they will leave. Even if the birds you have roosted are all hens as nearly as you can tell, you may be sure that there is a gobbler not too far away at this season of the year.

The next morning, before daylight, slip back quietly to the vicinity of the roosted birds. Don't flash a light around or you'll likely spook your turkeys for good. Park your vehicle a half mile or so away and walk in in the dark.

Usually, turkeys will come off the roost in the direction of fields or clearings in the timber. Us-

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ally, but not always. At any rate, get yourself into position in good cover and within a hundred yards or so of the roost. Get your moving around done before it starts to get good light.

You will hear the birds calling when they first start to stir in the morning. A tom may gobble sort of tentatively a time or two before he flies down. Now when the roosted birds are starting to stir is the time to yelp four or five times with your call—not too vigorously but just loud enough for him to hear. Be especially alert. You may be able to get in a telling shot as the gobbler flies down off the roost if you have made a good choice in your stand location. Otherwise, provided your calling is halfway acceptable, action should develop fast. Even if it doesn't, don't be too quick to abandon your blind. As mentioned before, it may take some gobblers a bit longer to get to you. One

may show up 15 minutes or more after you quit calling.

That's about the size of the spring turkey methods that have been paying off for me over the years. It requires a good bit of time, usually, to put a turkey in the bag. Mainly it's hours spent in the woods, getting the birds located and finding out where they are working during early morning and late afternoon hours. One thing about it, once you have the favored roosting sites and feeding areas located in your hunting area, you will find that the same spots produce year after year.

Sure, spring turkey hunting takes a lot of time, especially if you would be a consistently successful hunter rather than a one-time wonder. But the thrill of luring one of those wily, nervous, bronze-feathered big game birds into shotgun range is worth no end of time and effort. For my money, that's what hunting is all about. ●

A strutting tom, above, puts on a display. Seasonal fever definitely changes the personality of the turkey gobbler. Recognize the fact and exploit it, and you're on your way to success. It takes time and effort to become a good hunter, but prize is worth it.

Photos By Lovett Williams



Which Caliber?

HUNTING

selecting a deer rifle is often clouded by the great variety available and by limited knowledge of ballistics and bullet characteristics



By EDMUND McLAURIN

TIS SAID THAT IN TIME everything human changes. That goes for hunters and their ways, too, although the changes may take a long time making themselves manifest. The hunting season now close to ending has been one of those times.

Deer hunters, for example, were seen using more of a variety of rifle calibers than formerly. Despite the fact that Florida deer hunting is primarily associated with fairly close range shooting, often in brush, numerous hunters carried rifles chambered for such calibers as .243, 6mm Remington, .270 Winchester, .280 Remington, .308 Winchester, and the venerable .257 Roberts, chamberings usually regarded as "open country" hunting rifle calibers.

Their use indicates a spreading realization that the named calibers have versatile application, and in most instances of use on the Florida scene prove advantageous in extended range, flatter bullet trajectory path, and hard punch at target. What with more land being cleared for farming and cattle raising, and forests being interspersed with sizable logging cutovers, the Florida deer hunter can henceforth figure on sooner or later making some long shots.

Admittedly, the 12 gauge shotgun, firing buckshot or rifled slug, has long been a favorite of Southern states' deer hunters, and likely will always have good measure of popularity.

But even some of the most faithful users of a 12 gauge smoothbore are getting around to realizing that, at best, the shotgun is essentially a short range weapon, and that to reliably kill deer shot at beyond 50 yards, a rifle with good sights is needed. Many are consigning their shotguns solely to winged game shooting, and are turning to a rifle for their deer hunting. This, too, is a smart move.

Use of "open country class" rifle calibers are not ballistically wrong, either, although some Florida deer hunters using heavy calibers are overgunned, considering the thin skin and light frame of the Florida whitetail. Many of the bucks killed this season would have been dispatched just as quickly and as mercifully if a lighter caliber firearm had been used.

There must be sufficient killing energy, but it need not be unduly excessive. What is important is the bullet's combined style and structure. The

bullet must be of proper shape and have such weight and cohesion as to cause it to penetrate sufficiently before expanding or disintegrating from velocity remaining on arrival at target.

Conversely, the bullet used should not be of a type that will tend to zip through flesh without releasing most of its striking energy inside the animal. Usually, bullets of this type create only a small passage hole that results in slow hemorrhaging, with the mortally hit animal all the while putting added distance between itself and hunter. The result is that often a hit buck will get far enough into the brush to be lost to the hunter before dying.

In my opinion, it doesn't make sense to shoot a rifle caliber so large and hard recoiling that one's shooting cannot be controlled for maximum potential accuracy, with the moment of firing being feared rather than enjoyed. Hence, I recommend sensible use—where needed—of a light-recoiling 6 mm Remington, .243 Winchester or .257 Roberts (but always with proper bullet) when a heavier caliber proves more than can be comfortably and accurately fired.

Some hard-to-convince Florida deer hunters stoutly claim high velocity .270's, .243's, 6mm's and similar calibers cannot find logical application in Florida's typical brushy country. They say there likely will be bullet blow-up or changed, erratic course when a fired bullet hits a small twig or encounters a tree branch. Admittedly, this is true, but it is also true that a larger and heavier bullet at much lower velocity can take erratic course on contact with intervening brush, even though considered to possess better odds by reason of weight and lower velocity. In the aggregate, the velocity and flat shooting qualities of the named calibers work in their favor, provided, as must always be kept in mind, a proper type bullet is used.

Among deer rifle calibers, the medium velocity .30-30 Winchester undoubtedly has most widespread representation, largely influenced by the existence of so many Winchester Model 94 and Model 64 lever-action rifles and similarly chambered Marlin and Savage lever-actions. Deer hunters have long loved the well-balanced, fast-handling lever-actions produced in .30-30 Winchester caliber.

Used with 170 grain blunt-nosed, soft lead bullet,
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the .30-30 Winchester caliber has undoubtedly accounted for more deer than all other rifle calibers combined. Many users swear that it is the best deer hunting rifle caliber made.

I admit to the .30-30 Winchester caliber's popularity, but cannot agree that it is best for deer hunting. Offsetting its fame is the .30-30 Winchester caliber's shady background of many wounded and lost deer. Reliability is there only to degree of tied-in shooting skill. There have been many instances where a straight-away running buck hurriedly shot with a .30-30 has managed to keep going long enough to get away from the hunter before dying, with resultant loss both to hunter and the state's game supply.

On my desk as I write is a letter from a FLORIDA WILDLIFE reader seeking my advice in regard to suitable substitute for a deer rifle of .30-30 caliber. He writes, in part, "I shot a 90-pound buck at later measured range of 32 feet. It was a head-on centrally placed chest shot—yet, afterwards, I watched the deer pivot and plunge into the brush. It was necessary to trail this buck with dogs for more than two miles before he could be found and tagged. I've had other somewhat similar experiences in my 14 years of hunting with a .30-30. I ashamedly admit that it has taken me that long to realize I should use a more reliable caliber!"

Personally, I consider the writer's experiences exceptional; the .30-30 Winchester caliber is not all that bad. The caliber has sufficient power for close and medium range bullet penetration into a vital area of thin-skinned game, like our white-tail deer, when bullet placement is accurate. Yet, from time to time, reports drift in of unaccounted for field performance failure of the .30-30! There must be ballistic reason.

I strongly suspect that the .30-30's inherent unreliability stems from weakness somewhere in the combination of bullet sectional density, bullet velocity, bullet shape and bullet energy released in animal tissue. Keep in mind that it is the bullet that does the killing—not the rifle or the man behind it. Ballistically, the .30-30 Winchester caliber is not the most efficient in combined potential performance qualities—as, for example, would be a true 7mm and proper bullet style.

Long ago, I gave up putting big game killing dependence on the .30-30 Winchester caliber. Instead, I have been an avowed advocate of the .35 Remington caliber for medium range use in typical Florida deer hunting country. The 200 grain, lead-nosed bullet in that caliber has considerably more anchoring power than the 170 grain .30-30 Winchester caliber bullet, yet there is no noticeable difference in recoil felt at shoulder on firing.

On several past occasions I have had no alternative but to shoot straight-away running bucks in the rump. Not one went anywhere after being hit;

most went down as if brain-slammed with a heavy sledge hammer! Mostly, the bullets expended their striking energy entirely inside the animal's body. Recovered bullets invariably showed perfect expansion, and often ended up just under the skin of a shoulder. I regard that as good, obviously effective performance.

Also a point against the .30-30 is the fact that the caliber is very sensitive to variations in powder charge and bullet weight. Once a .30-30 Winchester caliber user sights-in with a given load, he definitely should not change to another loading without resighting his rifle. Home reloaders should also decide on a particular load and stay with it.

Quite likely, rifles chambered for the .30-30 Winchester cartridge will be carried by deer hunters for a long, long time. So many are owned.

However, as already reviewed, there is a notable trend toward use of more efficient calibers by Florida deer hunters, and changeover from conventional 12 gauge shotgun and buck shot to rifle.

Another trend is the growing use of short hunting guns.

Instead of the once ubiquitous long-barreled rifle or shotgun, more hunting guns with short barrels are to be seen in the hands of Florida hunters.

Where they formerly used rifle models with 24-inch or 22-inch barrels, hunters are now favoring rifles fitted with 20-inch or shorter barrel. Shotgunners are now commonly using guns of around 25 inches in barrel length, and, for deer, short 20-inch barrels specially bored to efficiently handle rifled slugs and buckshot.

It is true that the longer the barrel, and the greater the distance between rear sight and front sight, the longer and more accurate is the sighting radius. But the effectual difference, in short and medium range shooting of Eastern states' big game, is nothing to worry about when using a good combination of metallic sights, and practically nonexistent as an aiming problem when the hunting rifle is fitted with a precisely adjusted scope sight.

Several benefits accrue from use of a hunting gun with relatively short barrel. Such a gun usually weighs less than a long one and consequently is not as fatiguing to carry all day. The short barrel gun mounts, points and swings faster in skilled hands—yet smacks game targets with killing punch.

Actually, short barrel guns have been around a long, long time. Some 2,000,000 Winchester Model 94 lever-actions alone have been marketed with 16½ inches of barrel sighting radius. The Marlin Model 336 has long been made with short length barrel.

Currently popular are the 18½-inch barrel Remington Carbine versions of the Remington Models 760 and 742 big game rifles, along with the 20-inch, or shorter, barrel models like the Marlin

336, Savage 99E, Mossberg 742, and Remington Mohawk 600. All named are very effective out to approximately 175 yards average range.

Due to limited personal choice in factory-produced bolt-action big game rifles of short overall length, many shooters are having gunsmiths cut back their long barrel bolt-action rifles. (When this is done, it is important that the rifle's natural balance be maintained, or even enhanced, possibly by changing the butt-stock weight to compensate for the weight of the amputated barrel section. If anything, the altered rifle should be slightly muzzle heavy, to better settle down quickly to serious business when offhand aim is taken. A good gunsmith will know what needs to be done.)

Other bolt-action fans are simply ordering custom made short barrel big game rifles. Howard Sites, a southwest Virginia gunsmith, has already made several hundred bolt-actions with 20-inch or shorter barrels.

In ready-mades, the Remington Model 1100, Ithaca Model 37, Remington 870, Winchester Model 1200, Savage Model 30, Smith & Wesson Model 916 and Hi-Standard Flite-King serve admirably in their respective mechanical actions and available short barrel lengths.

SOME SORELY NEEDED CHANGES in the habits of Florida shooters have not as yet materialized—namely, interest stimulating changes in the staged shooting programs of most Florida rifle and skeet shooting clubs.

Many clubs are literally withering on the vine, what with the exerted effect of environmental changes and industrial expansion, combined with a dropoff in participant interest. Some have already closed down entirely. In other instances, apparently well-patroned clubs are thusly active only because newcomers are constantly replacing drop-outs. Many former shooters would return to club ranges, given some incentive.

Unfortunately, most scheduled Florida rifle tournaments are still fired entirely prone. Offhand and rapid-fire stages and running deer matches are few and far between.

Out West, particularly in Arizona and California, rifle clubs are introducing *silueta* rifle matches—long range offhand shooting with conventional hunting type, scope sight equipped center fire rifles at knock-down game figure silhouettes. The new form of shooting sport holds plenty of appeal. Participation is growing by leaps and bounds. A set up of regional and periodic national shoots is already operating in some local clubs.

A drawback to introduction of *silueta* rifle matches on the Florida scene is the long, open (but safe wild country background) shooting range required. However, it would be entirely feasible for any Florida club with a high earthen backstop or

some artificially created safety feature, to offer similar shooting at available firing ranges, utilizing the same type of smaller knock-down targets. Basically, the offhand shooting at scaled-down targets at 100 and 200 yards would be just as difficult as Western style *silueta*, although wind effect on bullet flight probably would not be a serious factor, as in the longer range Western form of silhouette shooting.

It's variety that gives shooting spice! We should have more of it on the Florida shooting scene.

ANY OILY OR GREASY SURFACE has natural affinity for dirt. Despite frequent wiping or brushing of an oily article to keep it clean of foreign deposits, it will invariably pick up dirt—often abrasive grains of sand.

After decades of making only partially successful onslaughts on dirt accumulation in the working parts of firearms (by periodic thorough brush washing in mineral spirits bath, and unhurried drying in sun before relubricating parts), I now believe I have the problem licked.

For the past few years, I have been coating cleaned mechanical parts and assembled gun actions with Rice's XF-15 colloidal graphite. The solution sprays directly from the container, but the gas that serves as carrying agent for the graphite evaporates quickly, leaving the deposited graphite in a dry, tough, even layer. Once dry, the graphite film, although microscopically thin, gives long-lasting lubrication to moving mechanical parts.

If any type of firearm will pick up dirt rapidly, it is one of autoloading type! Formerly, when I removed the trigger and action assembly from my Remington autoloading shotgun, previously lightly lubricated with gun oil, surfaces of working parts would be visibly coated with greasy dirt and sand particles, no matter if the gun had been used only one or twice since the last cleaning.

I long ago had tried squirting graphite particles on unoled moving parts after cleaning, but while this invariably helped smooth mechanical operation, the graphite particles tended to shake loose or keep their original grainy appearance. Not so with Rice's XF-15 colloidal graphite spray! Flat and curved metal surfaces and hard-to-lubricate parts in receiver recesses are given a dull black, even graphite coating that lasts.

I still clean my gun actions periodically, using mineral spirits bath and brush, before recoating with Rice's XF-15, but the chore is more a labor of love than necessity. Usually, what little dirt the XF-15 coated metal parts have picked up can be brushed out or removed by the judicious use of a toothpick.

XF-15 is manufactured right here in Florida, by Rice Gun Coatings, West Palm Beach 33407, the same firm that makes the excellent XF-10 gun bore cleaning solution. ●



CONSERVATION SCENE

Waterman's Outdoors

FLORIDA WILDLIFE's fishing columnist, Charles Waterman, has authored another book. This one, *THE PART I REMEMBER*, is a tidy packet of going on 50 pieces that touch on a diversity of outdoor subjects and span a fair number of years. That he knows whereof he writes is no news to FW readers.

His rich store of knowledge of the where, when, and how of the outdoors shows through here as it does in all of his works. But his know-how seldom stands in the way of the humor and humility that mark Waterman's efforts.

THE PART I REMEMBER carries the reader into such diversified scenes as a famous Atlantic salmon river, the high mountain habitat of the bighorn sheep, bonefish flats, mangrove-laced snook waters, and the chill crystalline home of the grayling. Nostalgia is here, too. The account of youthful traplines touched an especially responsive chord. And the story of a wet day turkey hunt triggered a mental nod of recognition. It's coincidental that the guide featured in the gobbler piece turned author for this very issue of *FLORIDA WILDLIFE* with a how-to-do-it on spring turkey hunting.

SALT WATER SPORTSMAN's Frank Woolner, says in the foreword, "THE PART I REMEMBER covers a lot of territory, and each story is a slice of life guaranteed to please those who have traveled this great country and experienced similar emotions. There is expertise nicely contained, the sensitivity of a sophisticated gentleman who truly loves woods and waters, and the delightful humor that spoofs while it teaches.

"In a world too often peopled by instant experts, he is a refreshing type who never just looks—he sees! Obviously I like the works of Waterman." To which I can add only a heartfelt "Me, too!"

Published by Winchester Press, 460 Park Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022. Hardbound, 200 pages. Price \$8.95.—M.N.

Refreshments Banned

THE OUTDOOR SLOBS have won another one. The Department of Natural Resources has clamped a ban on the taking of food and drink by tubers on the 3-mile Ichetucknee River float. Harmon Shields, DNR director, said the decision was made after a year's deliberation by the Division of Recreation and Parks, which has found littering to be a continuing problem at Ichetucknee Springs State Park near Fort White.

"Signs were erected asking the public to cooperate in cutting down on litter, and the public response was good," Shields said. "But the great numbers using the park caused an increase in amount of trash. Besides affecting the aesthetic quality of the Ichetucknee River, the volume of litter has greatly increased the work load of park rangers. After any day of heavy park use, rangers have to

spend many hours clearing debris from the river and its banks." Shields assured tubers they can have just as much fun floating down the river without taking along refreshments. "Why not have a picnic after the trip?" he suggested.

Dickey on Bobwhite

VERY FEW TRUE OUTDOORSMEN have the talent for writing about it, and even fewer do it well. Charley Dickey is among the "fewer." Those who have read his feature articles in *FLORIDA WILDLIFE* will recall how Dickey's lifetime of hunting and fishing experiences roll off each page of his work. And they'll quickly recognize the light, warm style of his prose in his new book, forthrightly titled *BOBWHITE QUAIL HUNTING*, recently released by Oxmoor House. It is certainly one of the most authoritative and readable works on bird hunting that has appeared in some time.

Charley begins with a crisp rundown on the bobwhite's life history, including some basics on habitat and management. From there he turns to the hows and wheres of quail hunting. Then there are glowing chapters on selection of hunting dogs and equipment. After fatherly tips on how to hunt and shoot, the author logically winds up with an excellent treatment of field care and dressing of quail, and a collection of tried and proven recipes for serving the delectable birds.

BOBWHITE QUAIL HUNTING is well illustrated with the author's black and white photographs and with art. It has 112 pages, size 8½ x 11, and a soft cover. It is modestly priced at \$2.95, and is available wherever books and magazines are sold. If a dealer is

out, contact the publisher, Oxmoor House (book division of SOUTHERN LIVING and PROGRESSIVE FARMER magazines), P.O. Box 2262, Birmingham, Alabama 35202. Don't write FLORIDA WILDLIFE. You won't get our copy.—G.S.

Alligator Education

THE SOUTHWEST FLORIDA REGIONAL ALLIGATOR ASSOCIATION has joined hands with the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission to initiate a pilot program on alligator education in Lee County, according to Commission Regional Manager Major J. O. Brown, Lakeland.

Over the past few years, Brown said, alligator populations have increased, causing a rash of

complaints. Many of these complaints are unwarranted.

In an attempt to reduce unnecessary complaints, the SFRAA, consisting of members from 17 conservation, education and zoological societies, will work under the supervision of the Commission to build a better public understanding of alligator habits and their effects upon the environment.

According to SFRAA Chairman George R. Campbell, education of the public, biological research, and solutions to citizens' complaints will be an integral part of the program.

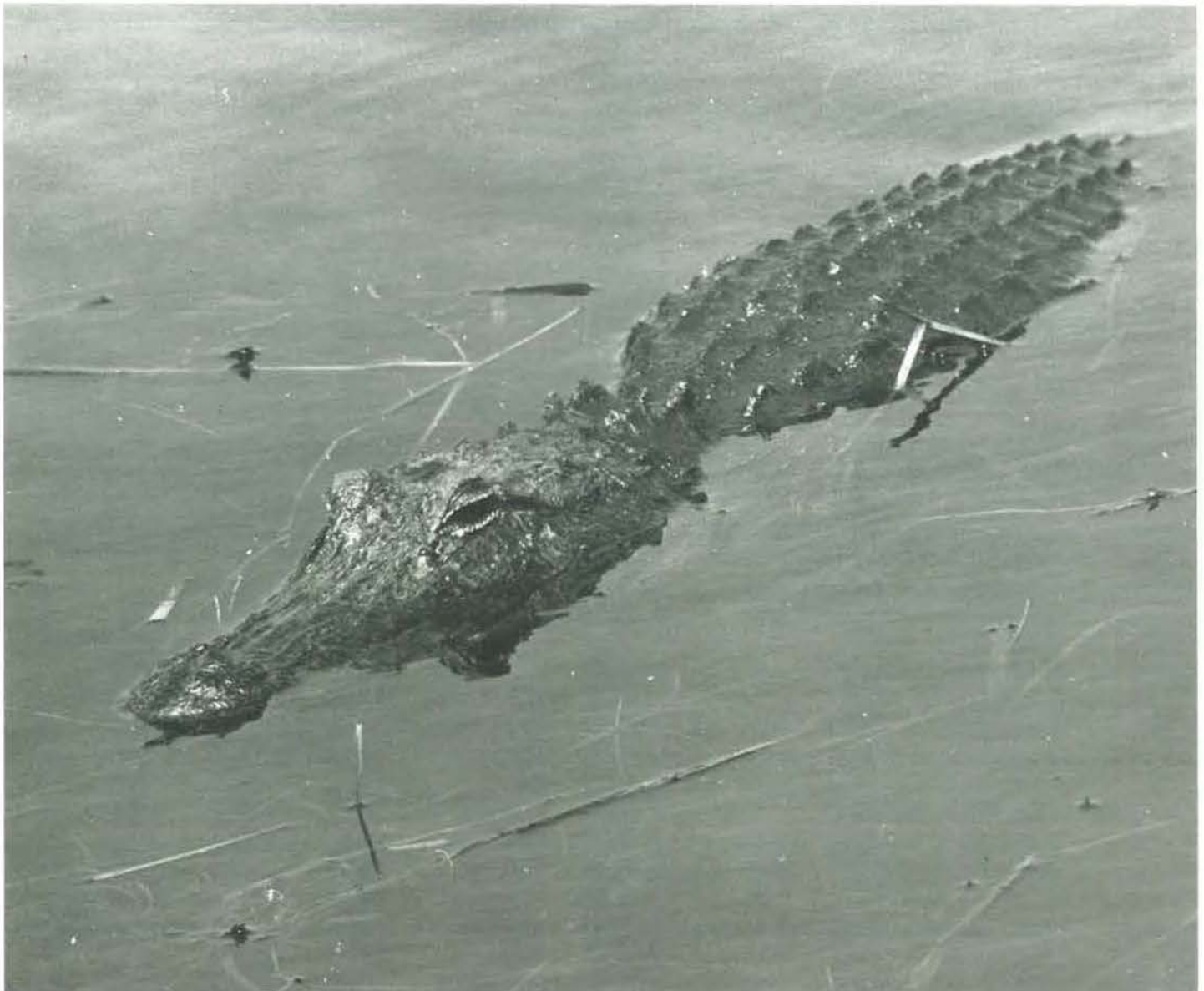
Educationally, Campbell said, SFRAA will reach the public through guest speakers, exhibits, and the news media, including a planned half-hour alligator tele-

vision documentary. All of these programs will emphasize the role of the alligator—its value and the problems it faces. Research will be a major function of the SFRAA program.

In order to estimate local alligator populations, a field census program will be initiated, and the data collected will be mapped and color coded to represent local population density. In addition, alligators captured will be tagged before being released.

Regarding citizens' complaints of "problem alligators," Campbell said SFRAA would be responsive to each complaint. "We will consider each situation, but if the problem is minimal and can be solved by education, we will request the complaint be with-

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drawn. If we are convinced a true problem exists and an animal must be removed, we will proceed."

According to Campbell, anyone wishing to contact the SFRAA for information or with problems concerning alligators should write SFRAA, P.O. Box 241, Sanibel Island, Florida 33957, or phone (813) 472-1103 days, or (813) 472-2825 evenings. Campbell also suggested citizens may contact him at his home at (813) 472-2825.

Environmental Protection

THE ENFORCEMENT ARM for Florida's environmental law is greater today than ever before. Each man that wears a peace officer's badge has the power to strengthen the protection of wildlife and the environment.

According to Dr. O. E. Frye, director, Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, most veteran enforcement officers are familiar with environmental laws, and new officers are receiving a solid introduction to the rules and regulations governing wildlife and the environment.

A hand-picked task force of 20 Commission wildlife officers have received special training and now serve as a cadre of instructors to acquaint municipal, county and state law enforcement officers with the duties and responsibilities of environmental and conservation law enforcement.

The environmental law training program is an integral part of the 320 instructional hours of training required for peace officer certification by the Police Standards Board and is designed to create an understanding of both urban and rural conservation problems.

"We realize," Frye stated, "that few peace officers other than wildlife officers are faced with daily problems of illegal dredge and fill activities, pollution problems or resulting fish kills, or illegal hunting or fishing violations; however, when the situation is present, it

is time for action, and there is a procedure for enforcement and reporting. Protection of Florida's environment needs the eyes and ears of all enforcement officers and the support of all citizens," Frye concluded.

Shop Owner Sentenced

A JACKSONVILLE PET SHOP OWNER, arrested several months ago by Game & Fresh Water Fish Commission officers, was sentenced by a Duval County judge to 10 days in jail plus a \$250.00 fine. He was charged with displaying and selling poisonous reptiles without proper license and bonding. The snakes, which he advertised and sold as harmless "carnos," were actually a poisonous Central American species. An estimated 40 had been sold to the general public before the arrest was made.

Steel Shot Question

FLORIDA DUCK HUNTERS will be using steel shot rather than lead in 1976 and after, if present plans by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service pan out.

The Federal agency has recommended regulations which would make steel shot mandatory in the Atlantic Flyway in the 1976 season, the Mississippi Flyway in 1977, and the Central and Pacific Flyways in 1978.

According to Dr. O. E. Frye, director of the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, the main objection to steel shot is that it is lighter in density and does not have the same killing power as lead and will, therefore, increase waterfowl losses from crippling.

In addition, steel shot may wear some gun barrels faster than lead—primarily double-barreled guns and older firearms.

Lead, a poison, is especially toxic to waterfowl, which grind their food in a gizzard and at the same time grind the spent shot they pick up while feeding in some waterfowl hunting areas.

Frye said the Florida Commis-

sion is generally against a blanket type steel shot regulation that would cover all waterfowl hunting in the state. Steel shot regulations should apply to certain major duck hunting areas where there is a danger of lead poison.

The extent of lead poisoning depends on the type of bottom a waterfowl marsh has. If it is soft, lead shot can sink into the mud, but if the bottom is hard, the shot is a potential lead poison hazard to ducks.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service plans public hearings on the steel shot proposal.

Building Plans Unveiled

PLANS FOR A NEW \$2.4 million home for the University of Florida's School of Forest Resources and Conservation were recently unveiled at Gainesville by Dr. John L. Gray, director of the school.

The long-awaited structure will permit the school to consolidate widely-scattered teaching and research functions into one modern facility on the UF campus. It is also expected to put the school back in good standing with the American Society of Foresters, which gave the school conditional 5-year accreditation in '72 because of inadequate physical facilities.

Construction of the three-story facility, designed by the Gainesville architectural firm of Moore, May & Harrington, Inc., was expected to begin by the end of the year, and the building should be ready for occupancy by mid-1976, Gray said.

The 47,000 square foot concrete and brick building will be located on the UF campus southeast of the Reitz Union between McCarty Drive and Museum Drive.

In addition to providing space for teaching functions, the building will house an extensive research program in forest biology which includes such projects as tree improvement through genetic selection, forest fertilization, forest entomology, and wildlife ecology.



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SPECIES

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.....8 pounds or larger

STRIPED BASS

.....10 pounds or larger

CHAIN PICKEREL

.....4 pounds or larger

BLUEGILL (BREAM)

.....1 1/2 pounds or larger

SHELLCRACKER

.....2 pounds or larger

BLACK CRAPPIE

.....2 pounds or larger

REDBREAST

.....1 pound or larger

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Florida Crane

Photo by Lovett E. Williams, Jr.

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